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UNCLAS KUWAIT 002092

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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, NEA/PD, P, PA AND SA/PPD

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL KPAQ KMDR KU PHUM SOCI ISLAMISTS

SUBJECT: REPORTS OF QURANIC DESECRATION SPARK LITTLE PROTEST IN KUWAIT

REF: A. STATE 90992

B. STATE 88240

¶1. Summary: Although local press have covered the story of supposed Quranic desecration at Guantanamo Bay, and some local Islamist groups have issued statements condemning the alleged actions, post has received little feedback from local contacts which would indicate widespread anger over the story, or that it would in any way negatively impact bilateral relations. End Summary.

¶2. Since the alleged Quran desecration story surfaced May 12 and 13, no press inquiries or protests have been directed to post's Public Affairs or Political sections. On May 14, Public Affairs sent a press release in Arabic and English to all major media outlets in Kuwait featuring the Secretary's May 12 statement before the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs. Although the papers ran portions of the Secretary's statement as part of larger stories, the press

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release was not published as a separate article.

¶3. Several articles have featured condemnation of the alleged desecration from Islamist sources, but none have received prominent placement. According to the English language daily The Daily Star, the Kuwait-based International Islamic Charity Foundation issued a statement on May 16 describing the alleged incident as "humiliation for the Holy Quran in which 1.5 billion Muslims believe," called upon U.S. authorities to speed up their investigations and urged Muslim governments to "shoulder their responsibilities in defending the Holy Quran." The Congregation of Shiite Scholars also condemned the alleged abuses, but added that it "is confident the abuse is an isolated act carried out by a foolish investigator."

¶4. Although Newsweek's retraction has also been covered by local press, the issue has been largely overshadowed by the May 16 National Assembly vote which granted women political rights.

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